

Bladen County Natural Area Inventory

TURNBULL CREEK SWAMP Significant Natural Heritage Area

Site significance: regional

Quadrangle: Elizabethtown North

Size: 647 acres

Ownership: State of North Carolina,
private

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES: Turnbull Creek Swamp natural area is a blackwater creek that is the watershed for much of the northwestern portion of the Bladen Lakes region. It supports a high quality example of the Coastal Plain Small Stream Swamp community that is large, mature in patches, and in good overall condition. The site contains a breeding population of Swainson's warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) on the Natural Heritage Program watch list.

LANDSCAPE RELATIONSHIPS: Turnbull Creek is a major drainage feature in northern Bladen County. From its headwaters in southeastern Cumberland County, it enters Bladen County near Ammon and flows southward, entering Cape Fear River just east of Elizabethtown. The moderately small size natural area includes floodplain swamp habitat west and southwest of the community of Johnsontown. It is connected by floodplain habitat to several natural areas in northern Bladen County, including Jenny Strand Pine Natural Area, Tatum Mill Pond/Cypress Bay, and Jones Lake/Salters Lake and Vicinity. Swamps provide home and foraging habitat for several mammals, and swamp habitat also provides critical breeding habitat for several species of birds; reptiles are common.

SITE DESCRIPTION: Turnbull Creek Swamp natural area comprises the active creek channel and floodplain of Turnbull Creek. Floodplain habitat is periodically flooded by rainfall, and the soils vary from shallowly inundated to saturated to wet between flooding events. The dense to moderately dense canopy is a mix of coniferous and hardwood species, with swamp tupelo (*Nyssa biflora*), swamp red maple (*Acer rubrum* var. *trilobum*), tulip-tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), and pond cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) prominent. The shrub layer is open to moderately dense, with coastal sweet-pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*) and cane (*Arundinaria tecta*) frequent.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: The great majority of this natural area is located in Bladen Lakes State Forest and managed by the State Division of Forest Resources, and requires no active management to maintain or enhance natural community structure and function. A small portion of the site is on private land and is not protected.

NATURAL COMMUNITIES: Coastal Plain Small Stream Swamp.

RARE PLANTS: none documented.

RARE ANIMALS: none documented.